



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council

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Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Heather Bond Somers and Harry A. Watson

Thursday, March 27, 2014

7:00 PM

Groton Senior Center, Route 117

FYE 2015 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING SPECIAL MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Mayor Schmidt.

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Somers

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Michael Graner, City Mayor Marian Galbraith, Board of Education members, City Councilors, RTM members, Town staff, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Office Assistant Lori Watrous.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Councilor de la Cruz.

III. INTRODUCTION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Elected officials introduced themselves at the request of Mayor Schmidt.

IV. READING OF PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Notice of Public Hearing pursuant to a resolution passed by the Town Council was read by Town Clerk Moukawsher.

V. BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

a. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger gave a brief summary of the proposed FYE 2015 budget. The proposed budget is \$122,837,302 which represents a 2.4% increase over the current year. He summarized proposed expenditures and noted that revenues are up. Mr. Oefinger suggested that the portion of the Fund Balance that is unassigned be increased to 8% and recommended setting aside \$1.8 million for FYE 2016 and \$1.8 million for FYE 2017 to offset the impact of the demolition of Pfizer's Building 118.

b. Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent Michael Graner stated that the proposed Education Budget is \$75,098,943 which represents a 1.9% increase over the current year. He noted that the primary reason for the increase is to fully fund health insurance. Dr. Graner remarked that the proposed budget is a level service budget which would maintain class size, require no layoffs, fund all programs, and continue all-day kindergarten.

VI. OPENING OF PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Schmidt called the FYE 2015 Budget Public Hearing to order at 8:21 p.m.

James English, 31 Potter Court, Noank, stated that Mystic & Noank Library employees are hard workers and the library is operated efficiently. He remarked that the library is important to senior citizens as they have large print books, periodicals, reference materials, and lectures of special interest to seniors. He urged the Council to fully support its request.

Keith Vandal, 800 Flanders Road, Building 2, Suite 5, Mystic, works for Coastal Environmental Services which operates the pump-out boats in the Mystic River and Thames River. Last year the pump-out boats kept over 100,000 gallons of waste out of local rivers. He asked for the Town's support to help keep area waterways clean.

Deborah Johnson, 196 Flanders Road, Mystic, urged the Council to approve the Education Budget as proposed. Last year there were cuts to staff, student programs, classroom supplies, and extra-curricula activities which directly affected students. Ms. Johnson stated that the proposed budget does not cut programs; maintains class sizes; includes no personnel layoffs; and is a balance between what the schools need and what the Town can afford.

Connie Readett, 10 New London Road, Mystic, stated that at the public comment portion of the Board of Education meeting, parents unanimously supported the proposed Education Budget. Ms. Readett implored Councilors not to make any reductions to the proposed budget.

Mary Ann Little, 22 Pearl Street, Noank, stated that Groton's teachers and staff are dedicated. She noted that no layoffs or increased class sizes are proposed in the Education Budget and she encouraged Councilors to approve the proposed budget.

Beth Horler, 14 Ferry View Drive, Gales Ferry, President of the Groton Education Association, stated that the proposed Education Budget maintains class sizes and programs. On behalf of the teachers of Groton she asked the Council to support the budget as proposed.

Scott Aument, 127 Rogers Road, stated that the Town relies too heavily on government-based revenues and suggested further reductions in spending. He feels that the education system in Groton needs to be more efficient. Mr. Aument believes that the Town should fund economic development and implement the suggestions in the police study.

Rosanne Kotowski, 24 Ann Avenue, does not support the Town Manager's proposed budget. She stated that the additional money in the Fund Balance should be used to reduce taxes. Ms. Kotowski highlighted areas in the Education Budget and Town Operations budget that she feels could be reduced. She feels the proposed budget is not affordable or sustainable.

Amber Haugeto, 210 High Meadow Lane, Mystic, noted that she expects AP and IB programs in high performing high schools. In October, when the budget for supplies was frozen, she participated with other parents in trying to find ways to fundraise to purchase glue sticks, Purell, and Kleenex. Ms. Haugeto supports the proposed Education Budget as it provides level services.

John Casey, 65 Pequot Avenue, Mystic, Co-President of the Mystic & Noank Library Board of Trustees, stated that with its book clubs, meetings, and programs, the library has become a community center. He asked the Council to fully fund its request, noting that the library could provide more programs and possibly get a summer intern to increase the technology footprint of the library. Mr. Casey also supports fully funding the Education Budget.

Dean Marcus, 800 Flanders Road, Mystic, works for Coastal Environmental Services. He stated that there are two pump-out boats in the Thames River and two in the Mystic River. He noted that the pump-out boats are a major contributing factor in the water being clean enough to harvest shellfish. Mr. Marcus urged the Council to approve the budget request for the pump-out boats to maintain clean water in our area.

John Ruggeri, 175 Ledgeland Drive, Mystic, supports the strings program in Groton schools and would like to see the third grade strings program reinstated.

Councilor Watson noted that Councilors received two emails in support of the Education Budget

as proposed.

Mayor Schmidt declared the public hearing closed at 9:05 p.m.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:06 p.m. was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Watson and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

Lori Watrous, Office Assistant